UNDERSTANDING PERCEPTION OF WEBSITE CHARACTERISTICS: EMPIRICAL STUDY FROM SERBIA

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Abstract: *Improving information and communication channels between organization and its environment enables discovery of new entrepreneurial opportunities, so development of customer relations is of great importance. In addition to treating customers as a significant source of knowledge, it becomes important to understand their relation towards new trends, such as communication via website. Within this paper, views of predominantly Generation Y in Serbia were studied in regards to perception of different characteristics of website: General Perception of website, Perception of aesthetic appeal, Perception of navigation convenience, and Perception of content. Research hypotheses were tested by analyzing data collected from a sample of 521 respondents from Serbia. We analyzed statistically significant differences in respondents' perception of website characteristics according to age, gender, and education level. Better understanding of the Generation Y's perception of characteristics of website should benefit businesses not only in Serbia, but also globally.*

Key Words: *Generation Y, Attitude Towards the Website, Website Perception, Aesthetic Appeal, Navigation Convenience, Content Perception*

1. INTRODUCTION

Millennials are also known as Generation Y, but there are many synonyms such as Generation Why, Generation Search, Generation Next, the Net generation, the digital natives, the dot.com generation, the Einstein generation, Echo Boomers, don't label us generation [1]. Generation Y is defined as a group of people whose birth years range from 1980 to 2000 [2]. Other researches suggest that millennial generation has different values, characteristics, and behavior compared to previous generations [2], [3]. Generation Y is larger than baby boomer generation [4], [5], and is seen by marketers as having a high level of spending power, that has been estimated to reach 50 percent of global consumption in 2017 [6]–[9]. The millennials have become an impressive group to be studied since their behavior is different compared to other generations, this is the reason why studying them acquires importance and relevance [10]. As 'stimulus junkies' they have shorter attention span and an irrepressible need for instant gratification. If they get an idea, they want to execute it immediately [11].

Millennial Generation is the relational generation, that seeks to establish relationships at work and beyond. Millennials are on the path to becoming the most educated generation in America's history. Already their rate of receiving undergraduate degrees has surpassed all previous generations. Members of this generation have been described as trustworthy, tolerant, individualistic, academically educated and with expertise in the use of technology that distinguishes them significantly from the generations that preceded them [9], [12]. Millennials have been labeled as open-minded, social, innovative, energetic, ambitious, reliable, motivated, and intelligent young people [9], [13].

Millennial Generation members are often associated with technology, and considered the first digital natives. They grew up with the Internet, cell phones, and social media. The Millennials use their knowledge of technology to enhance communication with family and frends. The Theory of Uses and Gratuities is one of the theories used in social media research to identify those motivational factors in digital media that influence Millennials. These young people are moving away from the conventional media opting for newer and more interactive media. Most of the time they aproach new media perceiving a functional and enjoyable value [9], [14].

Having grown up socializing and shopping online, Millennials are an essential ingredient in the development of e-commerce, and it will continue to grow along with their discretionary income. Although Millennials do not like pop-up ads, the graphics are very effective at capturing their attention and they will repeatedly visit a website that has competitive pricing and good shipping rates [10]. Millennials spend more, but have less loyalty to the brands than previous generations. Possible reason for this low loyalty may be greater exposure to price promotions. They also look for products and brands that match their personality, lifestyle, social and community values. They use brands to create images, to represent their personality and communicate their values [9].

This generation is more active in integrating technologies into their daily lives for marketing purposes, using their mobile devices and the traditional

internet means to connect to retailers or brands [15]. Its purchasing power and technological capacity have been crucial for minor online retailers who have benefited from this important segment of consumers.

On the other hand, they are very sensitive to electronic word-of-mouth advertising. It is considered more credible than traditional advertising because it is perceived as advertising that has gone through the evaluation of "people like me" [9], [16]

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this section, we define constructs in relation to which the views of internet users belonging to Generation Y are analyzed, and we give review of the literature from which the constructs were adopted.

2.1. Attitude Toward the Website (General)

The scale used to measure attitude toward website is composed of three, seven-point Likert-type statements used to measure a person's overall evaluation of a website.
I1 - I liked the website I saw.
I2 - I think it is a good website.
I3 - I think it is a nice website.

This scale originally appeared in the study by Stevenson, Bruner, and Kumar [17]. However, they indicated that the items were adapted from a measure of attitude toward the website by Chattopadhyay and Basu [18].

Cronbach's alphas of 0.97, 0.93, and 0.95 were reported for the scale Attitude toward the website (General) as used by Bruner and Kumar [19], Stevenson, Bruner, and Kumar [17], and Johnson, Bruner, and Kumar [20], respectively. No examination of the scale's validity was reported in these studies.

However, another study was conducted by these authors with that as one of its purposes [21]. Using a procedure called similarity analysis, the evidence indicated that the scale showed greater evidence of validity than two other competing measures of the same construct

2.2. Attitude Toward the Website (Aesthetic Appeal)

Four, seven-point Likert-type items measure how much a person likes a website because of the way it looks. Kwon and Lennon [22] stated that the scale was an adaptation of a scale they had used previously. The scale is composed of four, seven-point Likert-type statements used to measure a person's evaluation of aesthetic appeal of a website:
I4 - I like the feel of this website.
I5 - I like pictures/images used in this website.
I6 - I like the opening page of this website.
I7 - This website makes the games look very appealing.

Kwon and Lennon [22] used the scale in two main experiments, Experiments 1 with 630 respondents, and Experiments 2 with 650 respondents, each composed of college females.

Cronbach's alphas for the scale used by Kwon and Lennon [22] in Experiments 1 and 2, respectively, were 0.880 and 0.912.

2.3. Attitude Toward the Website (Navigation Convenience)

The ease with which a person reports being able to get around a website and find what is wanted is measured using four, seven-point Likert-type items. Kwon and Lennon [22] stated that the scale was an adaptation of a scale they had used previously. The scale is composed of four, seven-point Likert-type statements used to measure a person's evaluation of aesthetic appeal of a website:
I8 - It looks easy to find what you are looking for in this website:
I9 - It is easy to locate tabs and links in this website.
I10 - It is easy to navigate around this website
I11 - This website is well organized.

Kwon and Lennon [22] used the scale in two main experiments, Experiments 1 with 630 respondents, and Experiments 2 with 650 respondents, each composed of college females.

Cronbach's alphas for the scale used by Kwon and Lennon [22] in Experiments 1 and 2, respectively, were 0.964 and 0.989.

2.4. Attitude Toward the Website (Content)

This scale uses four, seven-point Likert-type items to measure how informative and useful the site is, especially with respect to merchandising the products. Kwon and Lennon [22] stated that the scale was an adaptation of a scale they had used previously. The scale is composed of four, seven-point Likert-type statements used to measure a person's evaluation of informativeness and usefulness of a website:
I12 - This website is informative.
I13 - This website reflects the brand's merchandise well.
I14 - This website seems to use advanced technologies.
I15 - There seem to be a lot of merchandise options you can choose from.

Kwon and Lennon [22] used the scale in two main experiments, Experiments 1 with 630 respondents, and Experiments 2 with 650 respondents, each composed of college females.

Cronbach's alphas for the scale used by Kwon and Lennon [22] in Experiments 1 and 2, respectively, were 0.904 and 0.947

3. RESEARCH HYPOTHESES, METHODS AND INSTRUMENTS

Within this paper, views of predominantly Generation Y in Serbia were studied in regards to perception of different characteristics of website: General Perception of website, Perception of aesthetic appeal, Perception of navigation convenience, and Perception of content. Research hypotheses were tested by analyzing data collected from a sample of 521 respondents from Serbia. We analyzed statistically significant differences in respondents' perception of website characteristics according to age, gender, and education level. Better understanding of the Generation Y's perception of characteristics of website should benefit businesses not only in Serbia, but also globally.

In accordance with the research objectives, research hypotheses have been defined as:

H1: There are differences between Generation Y's respondents of different gender regarding their perception of the Website characteristics.

H2: There are differences between Generation Y's respondents of different level of education regarding their perception of the Website characteristics.

H2.1: There are differences between Generation Y's respondents with high school diploma and those with master or PhD diploma regarding their perception of the Website characteristics,

H2.2: There are differences between Generation Y's respondents with Bachelor diploma and those with master or PhD diploma regarding their perception of the Website characteristics,

H3: There are differences between Generation Y's and Generation X's respondents regarding their perception of the Website characteristics.

A structured questionnaire has been developed in order to collect data on the views of internet users. All constructs and related items used in the questionnaire were adopted from published studies and linguistically adapted. The questionnaire was structured in the following way: in the first part of the questionnaire, general demographic data (gender, age and level of education) were required, and in the second part of the questionnaire were questions that included attitudes regarding the perception of the characteristics of the website. The second part of the questionnaire contained 15 items that measured 4 constructs in relation to the perception of a website: Attitude Toward the Website (General) (3 items), Attitude Toward the Website (Aesthetic Appeal) (4 items), Attitude Toward the Website (Navigation Convenience) (4 items), Attitude Toward the Website (Content) (4 items). All questions indicating attitudes of the respondents were evaluated on the 7 point Likert scale, ranging from 1 - strongly disagree to 7 - strongly agree. This reduced the possibility of forced choice of respondent, enabling a more accurate determination of attitude of the respondents toward the individual claims. All the above items were positively formulated.

The questionnaire was distributed online and a call for participation in the research was sent through the MailChimp marketing platform to the database of 1,500 randomly selected former and current students of the Faculty of Technical Sciences at the University of Novi Sad. To evaluate respondents' different perceptions towards web pages we used the following website: http://eipix.com/. The respondents were asked to simply browse the site and then express their attitude towards the website characteristics defined in the questionnaire. During the autumn of 2016 and during the spring of 2017, a total of 521 valid responses to the questionnaire were collected. Out of the total number of respondents, 462 (88.7%) of them were under the age of 26, 24 (4.6%) were older than 26 and younger than 30, and 35 (5.7%) were older than 30 years.

When it comes to respondents' gender, 198 (38%) of respondents were male and 323 (62%) of respondents were female.

In relation to the highest level of education, 353 (67.8%) completed secondary education (high school), 121 (23.2%) had Associate or Bachelor's degree, and 47 (9%) obtained Master's or PhD degree.

Statistical analysis was done with inferential (t-test for independent groups) and descriptive statistics.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

All the theoretical concepts used in this study were taken from previous studies published in scientific literature and they provided the theoretical framework for this research.

Due to the fact that the items for measuring perception of the characteristics of the website were not taken from just one source, first the analysis of the main components for the confirmation of the theoretical constructs was performed. The KMO (Kaiser-Mayer-Olkin) test and the Bartlett test were used to analyze the justification of the application of factor analysis. The measure of sample representativeness evaluated by means of the KMO measure of sample adequacy is 0,958, and according to the Kaiser's interpretation it is categorized as high. Bartlett's test for sphericity has reached statistical significance ($\chi2 = 9215.144$; $p = 0.000 <0, 05$), and in this way the conditions that justify the application of factor analysis are fulfilled. To assess the underlying structure for the 15 items of the Perception of Website Characteristics questionnaire a Principal Components Factor Analysis with Promax rotation and Kaiser Normalization was performed. The analysis confirmed existence of 4 factors as presented in Table 1. The total variance explained by the factor analysis was 88.285%. Since all items have the significant factor loadings (Table 1), the construct validity of individual subscales is considered appropriate. Items are grouped into factors (components) that constitute the characteristics of a website, in the same way as described in the literature:

Factor 1– Navigation Convenience: the eigenvalue of the most influential factor is 9.328, and amount of explained variance is 74.706 %. The highest factor loadings has the item:

Table 1 - Principal Components Analysis results

Factors / Items	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	% of explained variance	Cronbach's alpha
Factor 4 – General Perception					3.334 %	0.964
I1- I like the website I saw				0.918		
I2- I think it is a good website.				0.902		
I3- I think it is a nice website.				0.827		
Factor 3 - Aesthetic Appeal					4.903 %	0.936
I4- I like the feel of this website.			0.930			
I5-I like pictures/images used in this website.			0.805			
I6- I like the opening page of this website.			0.710			
I7- This website makes the games look very appealing			0.740			
Factor 1– Navigation Convenience					74.706 %	0.969
I8- It looks easy to find what you are looking for in this website	0.919					
I9- It is easy to locate tabs and links in this website.	0.907					
I10- It is easy to navigate around this website	0.914					
I11- This website is well organized.	0.843					
Factor 2. – Content					5.342 %	0.943
I12- This website is informative.		0.824				
I13- This website reflects the brand's merchandise well.		0.864				
I14- This website seems to use advanced technologies.		0.874				
I15- There seem to be a lot of merchandise options you can choose from.		0.865				
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Promax with Kaiser Normalization. a. Rotation converged in 6 iterations.						

I8 - It looks easy to find what you are looking for on this website.

The reliability of the scale evaluated by means of the Cronbach's alpha in this research is 0.964 (Table 1). Cronbach's alphas of 0.964, and 0.989 were reported for the subscale *Navigation Convenience* as used by Kwon and Lennon [22].

Factor 2– Content: the eigenvalue of the second factor is 9.121, and amount of explained variance is 5.342 %. The highest factor loadings has the item:

I14 - This website seems to use advanced technologies.

The reliability of the scale evaluated by means of the Cronbach's alpha in this research is 0.943 (Table 1). Cronbach's alphas of 0.904, and 0.947 were reported for the subscale *Content* as used by Kwon and Lennon [22] in two main experiments, Experiment 1 with 630 respondents, and Experiment 2 with 650 respondents, respectively.

Factor 3– Aesthetic Appeal: the eigenvalue of the third factor is 9.302, and amount of explained variance is 4.903 %. The highest factor loadings has the item:

I4 - I like the feel of this website.

The reliability of the scale evaluated by means of the Cronbach's alpha in this research is 0.936 (Table 1). Cronbach's alphas 0.880 and 0.912 were reported for the subscale *Aesthetic Appeal* as used by Kwon and Lennon [22], in two main experiments, Experiment 1 with 630 respondents, and Experiment 2 with 650 respondents, respectively.

Factor 4– General Perception: the eigenvalue of the fourth factor is 8.776, and amount of explained variance is 3.334 %. The highest factor loadings has the item:

I1 - I like the website I saw.

Table 2 - Independent samples t-tests for gender comparisons with Levene's test for testing equality of variances for Generation Y's respondents

	Levene's Test		t-test for Equality of Means				
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
General perception of the Website	10.494	.001	-2.546	463	.011	-.0382	.0150
Perception of the aesthetic appeal	4.152	.042	-2.847	463	.005	-.0793	.0272
Perception of the navigation convenience	16.822	.000	-2.447	463	.015	-.0339	.0139
Perception of the content	9.065	.003	-3.206	463	.001	-.0457	.0143

The reliability of the scale evaluated by means of the Cronbach's alpha in this research is 0.964 (Table 1). Cronbach's alphas of 0.97, 0.93, and 0.95 were reported for the subscale **General Perception** as used by Bruner and Kumar [19], Stevenson, Bruner, and Kumar [17], and Johnson, Bruner, and Kumar [20], respectively.

According to the proposed hypothesis that:

H1: There are differences between Generation Y's respondents of different gender regarding their perception of the website characteristics,

Perception of the aesthetic appeal (t=-2.847, df=463, p<0.005), Perception of the navigation convenience (t=-2.447, df=463, p<0.015), and Perception of the content (t=-3.206, df=463, p<0.01) (Table 2). Females more positively estimated all characteristics of the Website (Table 3).

According to the proposed hypotheses that:

H2: There are differences between Generation Y's respondents with different levels of education regarding their perception of website characteristics,

Table 3 - Group statistics for average scores on dimensions of attitudes and perception according to gender

	gender	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. Er. Mean
General perception of the Website	Male	175	4.6324	1.73650	.13127
	Female	289	5.0127	1.44185	.08481
Perception of the aesthetic appeal	Male	175	4.4871	1.59365	.12047
	Female	289	4.8849	1.37087	.08064
Perception of the navigation convenience	Male	175	4.6571	1.69525	.12815
	Female	289	5.0095	1.37489	.08088
Perception of the content	Male	175	4.4657	1.62469	.12282
	Female	289	4.9221	1.39630	.08214

the next part of this work represents the analysis of given scores with Levene's test for testing equality of variances, as well as the t- test which both confirm these differences.

By using t-test for independent samples we found significant gender differences in the average scores calculated for all dimensions of the perceptions of the website: General perception of the website (t=-2.546, df=463, p<0.011),

H 2.1: There are differences between Generation Y's respondents with high school diploma and those with master's or PhD degree regarding their perception of the website characteristics,

H 2.2: There are differences between Generation Y's respondents with bachelor's degree and those with master's or PhD degree regarding their perception of the website characteristics,

Table 4 - Independent samples t-tests for education level comparisons with Levene's test for testing equality of variances for Generation Y's respondents those with bachelor's degree and those with master's or PhD degree

	Levene's Test		t-test for Equality of Means				
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Er. Difference
General perception of the Website	2.243	.135	3.177	352	.002	.115	.0367
Perception of the aesthetic appeal	3.729	.054	2.899	352	.004	.190	.0673
Perception of the navigation convenience	1.787	.182	3.068	352	.002	.104	.0344
Perception of the content	5.215	.023	2.926	352	.004	.103	.0356

given scores were analyzed with Levene's test for testing equality of variances, as well as with the t- test which both confirmed these differences.

There are significant differences between respondents with high school degree and those with master's or Phd degree in the average scores calculated for all dimensions of the perceptions of the website: General perception of the website (t=3.177, df=352, p<.002), Perception of the aesthetic appeal (t=2.899, df=352, p<.004), Perception of the navigation convenience (t=3.068, df=352, p<.002), and Perception of the content (t=2.926, df=352, p<.004) (Table 4). Respondents with

given scores were analyzed with Levene's test for testing equality of variances, as well as with the t- test which both confirmed these differences.

- General perception of the Website (t= -2.772, df = 45, p<.008),
- Perception of the navigation convenience (t=-2.522, df = 45, p<.015). (Table 5)

5. CONCLUSIONS AND LIMITATIONS

Within this paper, we studied the perception of certain characteristics of the website by primarily young internet users from Serbia belonging to the Generation Y.

Table 5 - Independent samples t-tests for education level comparisons with Levene's test for testing equality of variances for Generation Y's respondents, those with high school diploma and those with master's or Phd degree

	Levene's Test		t-test for Equality of Means				
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
General perception of the Website	1.400	.239	3.118	127	.002	.12666794	.04059823
Perception of the aesthetic appeal	2.312	.131	2.692	127	.008	.20015794	.07453885
Perception of the navigation convenience	1.854	.176	3.211	127	.002	.11783238	.03670245
Perception of the content	4.275	.041	2.665	127	.009	.10359029	.03882619

high school diploma estimated significantly more positively all characteristics of the Website. These results support the hypothesis H2.1.

There are significant differences between respondents with bachelor's degree and those with master's or Phd degree in the average scores calculated for all dimensions of the perceptions of the website : General perception of the Website (t=3.118, df=127, p<.002), Perception of the aesthetic appeal (t=2.692, df=127, p<.008), Perception of the navigation convenience (t=3.211, df=127, p<.002), and Perception of the content (t=2.665, df=127, p<.009) (Table 5). Respondents with Bachelor diploma significantly more positively estimated all characteristics of the Website. These results support the hypothesis H2.2.

Respondents with bachelor's degree estimated slightly more positively all characteristics of the website then respondents with high school diploma, but these differences were not statistically significant.

According to the proposed hypotheses that:

H3: There are differences between Generation Y's and Generation X's respondents regarding their perception of the website characteristics,

User opinions were analyzed in relation to the four constructs: General perception of the website, Perception of aesthetic appeal, Perception of navigation convenience, and Perception of content. A statistically significant difference in the attitudes of respondents belonging to the Generation Y in terms of gender and level of education was determined. It has been established that there are statistically significant differences between Generation Y respondents with the highest level of education (MSc or PhD), and other respondents from Generation Y. A statistically significant difference was also established between respondents with the highest level of education (MSc or PhD) who belonged to different age groups. These results could lead to the conclusion that age significantly impacts the perception of the observed features of the website. In further research, it would be useful to analyze the identified differences for a better understanding of this segment.

A better understanding of attitudes relating to the perception of the characteristics of the website of young users from Serbia could benefit business public globally, and not only in Serbia.

Table 6 - Independent samples t-tests for age comparisons with Levene's test for testing equality of variances for respondents with master or Phd diploma

	Levene's Test		t-test for Equality of Means				
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
General perception of the Website	5.823	.020	-2.772	45	.008	-.77398963	.27921646
Perception of the aesthetic appeal	3.833	.056	-1.735	45	.090	-.52924442	.30504476
Perception of the navigation convenience	10.337	.002	-2.522	45	.015	-.83075336	.32943558
Perception of the content	.048	.828	-1.065	45	.292	-.28396222	.26651798

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